



# NEWS

*from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service*

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## **SERVICE GAINS VALUABLE INPUT FROM FISHERIES STAKEHOLDERS ON RECREATIONAL FISHERIES MANAGEMENT**

Working with landowners to improve fisheries habitat and access, compiling comprehensive data on the economic benefits of fishing, and increasing public awareness were major topics of discussion when more than 75 representatives of state natural resource agencies, conservation groups, Native American Tribes, and the fishing and boating industries met in Phoenix, Arizona, October 22, 1996.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and other Federal agencies are working to better define their role in enhancing recreational fishery resources, partly in response to key policies such as a Presidential Executive Order on Recreational Fisheries issued in 1995. The Phoenix meeting focused on other stakeholders' roles and how to better coordinate recreational fisheries management.

"The group generated a lot of food for thought by identifying key fisheries issues around which America's angling interests can join hands and work together," said Acting Fish and Wildlife Service Director John Rogers. "I am encouraged by the strong consensus on conserving fish habitats that emerged during the meeting and look forward to great progress in rebuilding fisheries across America."

The National Fisheries Stakeholders Meeting was sponsored by the Sport Fishing and Boating Partnership Council and the American Sportfishing Association. The Council serves as a Federal advisory panel on fishing and boating issues to the Secretary of the Interior through the Service director. The American Sportfishing Association is a non-profit trade association representing the sportfishing industry.

The meeting in Phoenix focused on four areas of fisheries management: habitat conservation, development and maintenance of access facilities, public education, and partnerships.

The categories correspond with those outlined in the Recreational Fishery Resources Conservation Plan developed earlier this year by Federal agencies. The plan outlines Federal agencies' role in improving recreational fishery resources and fishing opportunities.

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For **habitat conservation**, the group's top recommendations were to develop partnerships with private landowners to protect aquatic habitats, expand matching fund programs for habitat projects, and develop major watershed plans.

Other topics were creating a systematic monitoring system for habitat health, increasing public awareness of fisheries habitat issues, ensuring Federal and state management goals are complementary, and creating financial incentives and technical assistance for watershed councils.

For **fishing access**, the group's top recommendations were to develop incentives for private landowners to provide access to fishing, dedicate a state marine fuel tax to finance access, and provide adequate access to urban fisheries.

The group also discussed ranking regional access needs, increased cooperation between public agencies and the private sector to provide more access, enhancing access to major river fisheries, increasing partnerships with local agencies to offset costs of new access, and requiring Federal projects to provide access.

For **public education**, the group's top recommendations were to establish more urban fishery enhancement programs; develop ways to measure the success of education and outreach programs; and increase partnerships among conservation organizations, sportfishing groups, and outdoor clubs.

The group also supported mentor programs for young anglers, increasing angler ethics education, creating more user-friendly programs for schools and civic organizations, establishing fisheries education centers in urban areas, and establishing fishing tackle loaner programs.

For **partnerships**, the group's top recommendations included more industry promotion of the economic importance of fishing and continuing fisheries stakeholder meetings on a regular basis.

The group also recommended increased promotion of fishing benefits, adopting an "ecosystem approach" to fisheries management wherever possible, making common resources available through the Internet, and more cooperative work to control non-native species and fish diseases.

In August 1995, former Fish and Wildlife Service Director Mollie Beattie requested that the Sport Fishing and Boating Partnership Council convene fisheries stakeholder meetings to compile recommendations on the appropriate role of the Service in recreational fisheries management.

The Council subsequently sponsored several such meetings and used the information gathered from stakeholders to complete a formal report, which was presented to Acting Service Director John Rogers in August 1996.

At that time, the Council recommended additional stakeholder meetings at the national level as well as in the Service's seven geographical regions. Acting Director Rogers concurred with this recommendation. The Service has begun the regional meetings and plans to complete them within the next few months.

The Council is made up of state resource agency directors, representatives of fishing and boating industries and associations, and experts in resource conservation, recreation, and public outreach. The director of the Fish and Wildlife Service and the president of the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies serve as *ex officio* members. (A current membership listing is attached.)



# **FACTS**

*from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service*

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## **Sport Fishing and Boating Partnership Council Members**

(October 1996)

**John Rogers - Ex officio**  
Acting Director

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service      **Duane Shroufe - Ex officio**  
President  
International Association of Fish  
and Wildlife Agencies

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### **Council Chair:**

Helen Sevier, CEO  
B.A.S.S., Incorporated

**Tom Bedell, President**  
Outdoor Technologies Group

**Eddie Smith, CEO**  
Grady White Boats

**Earl Bentz, President**  
Bentz Company

**James Timmerman, Director**  
South Carolina Department of  
Natural Resources

**John Charvat**  
Brunswick Marine Group

**Hank Todd, Vice President**  
Business Development,  
Government and Tourism  
Carlson Companies, Inc.

**David Hall, Vice President**  
and General Manager  
The Nashville Network

**Steve Wilson, Director**  
Arkansas Game and Fish  
Commission

**Ray Hobbs, Senior Vice**  
President  
General Merchandise Manager  
Wal-Mart Stores, Incorporated

**Jack Wingate, President**  
American Fisheries Society

**Arva Jackson, retired**  
National Oceanic and  
Atmospheric  
Administration

**Rebecca Wodder, President**  
American Rivers

**William Miller, Chairman**  
American Sportfishing  
Association

**Roy Montgomery**  
National Marine Manufacturers  
Association

**Michael Sciulla, Vice**  
President  
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